

### **Model of Useful Coordination Practice: Wickenburg**

Gaps in transportation services do exist, as illustrated by the previous section. Throughout the region however, people are developing innovative solutions to resolve these gaps and make transportation accessible to all. The Wickenburg coordination project is one example of the useful coordination practices that have been implemented. The following article appeared in the MAG agency newsletter.

#### *Quality of life maintained for Wickenburg residents*

It has been said that through crisis situations new opportunities can arise. This has been proven true by the coordination effort taken on by the Town of Wickenburg. When a group of dialysis patients in their mid-eighties from Wickenburg suddenly found themselves without transportation to their dialysis treatment, something had to be done. The Town of Wickenburg currently has no dialysis center and the patients, who need dialysis three days a week, had been transported regularly to their treatments in Sun City. Funding shortfalls forced the agency that had been providing their transportation to discontinue the service. This left the Wickenburg residents without transportation to their lifeline.

“If you don’t get your dialysis you don’t live. It’s that simple,” said Pauline Hipp, one of the patients left without transportation when the original van service ended. Pauline says her husband used to take her on the 80-mile round trip from Wickenburg to the Desert Dialysis Center in Sun City, but he passed away. When the transportation service suddenly ended, Pauline said it became a monumental struggle.

Another Wickenburg resident Russ Greene said he was forced to use his Social Security checks to pay for private transportation twice a week. The third day his son-in-law makes the trip. “We’ve made it, but it’s still hard. My son-in-law has to take off once a week and loses \$120 by doing that, because he’s still working,” said Greene. “So that’s hard on his part. Each one of us tries to get a ride, and it’s quite a hardship on us,” he said.

The six older adults in Wickenburg have peace of mind now that they have reliable transportation to their dialysis appointments, thanks to a new collaboration among the public and private sector that provides a new van service for the patients.

“All of the older adults were very concerned, but no one had a solution,” said Wickenburg Town Manager Gary Edwards. “For a short time, they were able to arrange their own transportation, but these were not long-term, consistent solutions. Fortunately, that’s when MAG stepped in to help find a solution,” he said.

When the Arizona Kidney Foundation and the dialysis center serving the Wickenburg residents called MAG with news of the situation, MAG began looking for alternatives. After weeks of brainstorming and numerous phone calls, a workable plan finally evolved. Valley Metro donated a van and free driver training for volunteers. The Town of Wickenburg committed to subsidize the service by paying for the gas, insurance and maintenance within a budget. The Area Agency on Aging agreed to be the host agency for the van. Pat Campbell, the social worker at the Desert Dialysis Center, a for-profit company, recruited and organized volunteers.

The Desert Dialysis Center's agreed upon responsibility will be to recruit and schedule training for the volunteers. Organize a schedule for the volunteers that are responsive to the needs of all Wickenburg residents needing transportation to their dialysis appointments. Schedule follow-up training as needed and ensure the volunteers keep the van clean, full of fuel and in good working order. Notify the Area Agency on Aging when the van needs maintenance.

Town Manager Gary Edwards was astounded and gratified by the partnerships that made the coordination possible. "This innovative arrangement helps to meet a critical need. Not one of the partners could have done this alone. This is a great example of how the combined resources and ingenuity of many can outperform the talents of a few."